

## What is an Ombudsman?

A public official appointed to investigate citizens' complaints local or national government agencies that may be infringing on the rights of individuals.

Source: Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language Second College Edition

## Why would you want to contact the Ombudsman?

If you have a complaint against any city department or agency, you should contact the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is available to investigate complaints about abandoned cars, illegal dumping, flooded streets, open/vacant/dangerous buildings, falling trees, running water, overgrown lots, feral dogs, and rodent control, for example.

## There are several ways to contact the Office of the Ombudsman:

- Telephone: (313) 224-6000
- Fax: (313) 224-1911
- Email: [ombudsman@ombud.ci.detroit.mi.us](mailto:ombudsman@ombud.ci.detroit.mi.us)
- U.S. Mail and Walk-ins: 2 Woodward Ave. Room 114, Detroit, Michigan 48226

**Office of the Ombudsman**  
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center  
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 114  
Detroit, MI 48226  
**(313) 224-6000**

**Ombudsman Office Hours**  
8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday



# Ombudsman's Newsletter

*"Getting Problems Out of the Way So That Progress Can Occur"*

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## Record Number of Complaints Received

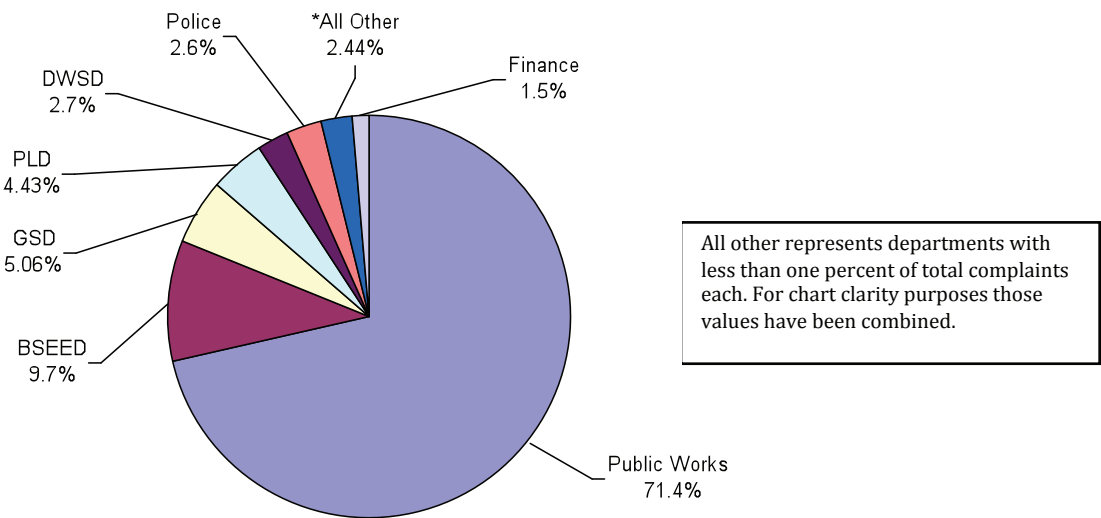
Securing a quality of life during the bankruptcy process has been painful for Detroiters, and the Office of the Ombudsman has proof. Complaints about falling trees, sinkholes, illegal dumping, dangerous properties, and snow removal far outweigh complaints recorded in previous years.

The 2014 Polar Vortex can take the most credit for causing havoc, along with the unaccountable contractors who failed residents miserably when they neglected their obligations. The Office of the Ombudsman worked overtime to accommodate the volume of complaints generated by people whose streets were not cleared.

"In just two days, we responded to 2,832 calls and 365 voicemails," City Ombudsman Durene Brown reported. The increase in calls about snow removal caused a spike in the number of complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman from March 1, 2013, until February 28, 2014.

"This is the first time we've seen such a jump in complaints received," Brown added. The total number of complaints received over for the past 12 months nearly exceeded previous years by 77 percent. The Office of the Ombudsman recorded 26,686 calls and inquiries, documenting soaring complaints about service delivery and lack, thereof.

## 2013-2014 Ombudsman Complaints by Department



## Ombudsman Influences Legislation

In 2006, Detroit City Ombudsman Durene Brown convinced Lansing legislators that areas around public libraries should be classified as drug-free zones, similar to zones designated near schools. As a result, Public Acts 552 and 553 were enacted by the state legislature, making punishment stiffer for criminal activity near libraries.

Earlier this year, the Ombudsman successfully influenced state legislators again, prompting State Senator Virgil Smith (pictured at right) to lead the charge against blight violations and violators. Smith credited Brown with providing the foundation for Senate Bills 35-39, based on recommendations she submitted to City Council. Bipartisan support included Smith (D-Detroit), Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge), Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton), Bert Johnson (D-Highland Park), and Tupac A. Hunter (D-Detroit).



This year, Brown will attempt to encourage the City Council to adopt a new ordinance requiring snow removal and grass-cutting contractors to have GPS technology in all service trucks and vehicles.

“Snow removal during Polar Vortex 2014 was a fiasco,” Brown said. “Too many neighborhoods and streets were never plowed, and it caused a hardship for emergency vehicles, folks who needed to get to work or medical appointments, not to mention the seniors who were trapped inside their homes for most of the season.”

## Ombudsman’s 2014 Recommendations

- Direct Auditor General to conduct a follow up audit of the Demolition Division of the Buildings Safety & Engineering Department
- Enact a new ordinance that requires all contractors that remove snow or cut grass/weeds to have GPS installed on their vehicles to accurately determine which areas were or were not serviced
- Help senior residents prepare for the winter by organizing Snow Angels who shovel sidewalks, driveways, and porches for the homebound
- Begin to plan for the upcoming 2020 Census

## Top 10 Ombudsman Complaints by Zip Code and Departments

March 1, 2013 - February 28, 2014

Zip Code	Complaints Received	Top Two Complaints - #1	#2
48226	509	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris	Finance-Tax Refund Not Received
48224	184	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris
48219	169	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass
48228	166	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass
48235	156	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass
48205	152	DPW-High Grass & Weeds	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass
48227	146	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris
48238	140	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris & High Grass & Weeds	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass
48213	121	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris
48214	118	BSEED-Building Dilapidated/Open to Trespass	DPW-Illegal Dumping/Debris



## Ombudsman wants City Council to request State Highway Up-Keep

Detroit has enough problems. As the city struggles to deliver services, the state must also do its part.

“At this point, we need all hands on deck,” Ombudsman Durene Brown said

Maintenance of highway service drives and ramps is the responsibility of the state. Removal of trash and debris, along with mowing, plowing and repairs fall upon the state. Lighting is also a problem, not just for the city but also the state roads and highways that pass through the city. As the city works to upgrade its service delivery program, the state must also up-hold its responsibility for maintaining public safety on public roads.